

News Release



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San Francisco Bay's Newest State Park

New *Eastshore State Park* Balanced For Environment and Recreation

BERKELEY -- The California State Park and Recreation Commission will be conducting a public hearing Friday, December 6, 2002 on the proposal to create the newest State Park for the San Francisco Bay Area.

The park extends approximately 8.5 miles along the eastern shoreline of the San Francisco Bay from the Oakland Bay Bridge north to the Marina Bay neighborhood in the city of Richmond. The recommendation to the Commission is that what has been called the Eastshore project until now be officially named Eastshore State Park.

The Commission hearing will held at the Island Ballroom at the Berkeley Marina Radisson Hotel beginning at 9:30 AM.

"This is a historic step forward for the protection of open space in the East Bay. For decades, a dedicated group of citizens has worked tirelessly to preserve this unique and beautiful bay frontage. We are proud to make this dream a reality with the creation of Eastshore State Park," said Joe Cotchett, chairman of the California State Park and Recreation Commission.

The plan is the result of a joint planning effort by the State Department of Parks and Recreation, the East Bay Regional Park District and the California Coastal Conservancy. In addition to naming the new park, the Commission will be asked to classify it as a State Seashore, approve the new General Plan which governs future use and development of the facility, and establish two Marine Reserves as separate units adjacent to the new park.

"We have spent nearly two years in a very detailed planning process," said Ruth Coleman, Acting Director of California State Parks. "We have been meeting with hundreds of

people and dozens of groups and local agencies. We believe we have now forged a 'balanced' plan that has something for everyone, a proposal that creates the best mix of recreational uses and natural resource protection."

A primary objective of the plan is to create a park that will be "a recreational facility harmonious with its natural setting." The plan recommends strong environmental protections in that the park will include the additional classifications of Marine Reserve and State Seashore. These classifications allow for the "balance" between the proposed recreational uses and the increased levels of natural resource protection recommended for specific parts of the park.

The park includes more than 2,260 acres of uplands and tidelands along the waterfronts of the cities of Oakland, Emeryville, Berkeley, Albany and Richmond. Of the total acreage, 44 percent is designated for preservation and conservation of natural resources and 56 percent is designated for recreation of various types.

Within the park, approximately 2,002 acres is tidelands and the remaining 260 acres is referred to as an upland area. The tidelands, or near-shore zone, is comprised of rich tidal marshes, subtidal areas and mudflats. Much of the existing upland area is the result of fill placement in the Bay west of the historic shoreline.

"The balance we have achieved here is what makes this plan so successful," said Ron Schafer, State Parks Superintendent of the Bay Area District. "We have listened to all sides and we have built their strongest concerns into the recommendations. We truly do have a plan that presents the best of all desires."

The increased level of natural resource protection is found in the recommendation that designates two areas as marine reserves: the 405-acre Emeryville Crecent and the 190-acre Albany Mudflats. Both areas are significant habitat areas, particularly for birds on the Pacific Flyway. In addition to the reserves, the plan calls for a number of other environmental enhancements. Those include re-vegetating Strawberry Schoolhouse Creek, removal of construction rubble and re-grading sections of shoreline, and enhancing coastal scrub and grassland habitats. The plan also reserves a large "no access" area in the Berkeley Meadows to accommodate foraging by raptors and the establishment of undisturbed nesting areas. There will be trails around this area, but not through it, in order to protect this area for wildlife habitat and use.

For recreation, the plan recommends that the Albany Plateau could be developed as the best site for sports fields. However, State Parks has determined that the best way to allow for such fields is to have another agency own and operate the land and facilities. The reason for this is that under the Resources Code of the State of California, State Parks is not allowed to develop permanent, local recreation facilities. That means State Parks is prohibited from using its money for local recreation facilities. However, if a local entity owned the land, there are significant grants available to local cities, counties and park districts for such recreational development. This means if it is local land, the opportunities for potential funding are greater.

Regarding dogs, the plan recommends that Pt. Isabel and North Pt. Isabel be designated as the "off-leash" dog areas. This designation will make 20% of the entire unit available for off-leash dog use. For the rest of the area, dogs will be prohibited or required to be on leash.

For windsurfing and other human powered boats, access will be provided from the Albany Neck and Bulb, but no autos will be permitted. An alternative windsurfing site is being proposed at Point Isabel and other sites exist and are possible in the immediate vicinity.

The effort to achieve the goal of an Eastshore park has grown out of decades of effort by Bay Area citizens and environmental organizations to stop the filling of San Francisco Bay and to protect the waterfront as a public open space resource. It was in January 2001, that State Parks, East Bay Regional Park District and State Coastal Conservancy began working with a consulting team to develop the Eastshore General Plan and Environmental Impact Report, both of which were released for public review and comment October 21, 2002.

It should be noted that this parkland offers some of the most spectacular panoramic views of the San Francisco Bay Area, including Treasure Island, Alcatraz, Angel Island, Mt. Tamalpais, the San Francisco skyline, Golden Gate Bridge and the Marin Headlands. It is a shoreline that reflects the influences of both natural systems and human intervention. It is a fitting place for the newest California State Park for the San Francisco Bay Area.

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